Mesa Verde

For information call: (303) 529-4461 or (303) 529-4475
For EMERGENCIES call: (303) 529-4469

Mesa Verde National Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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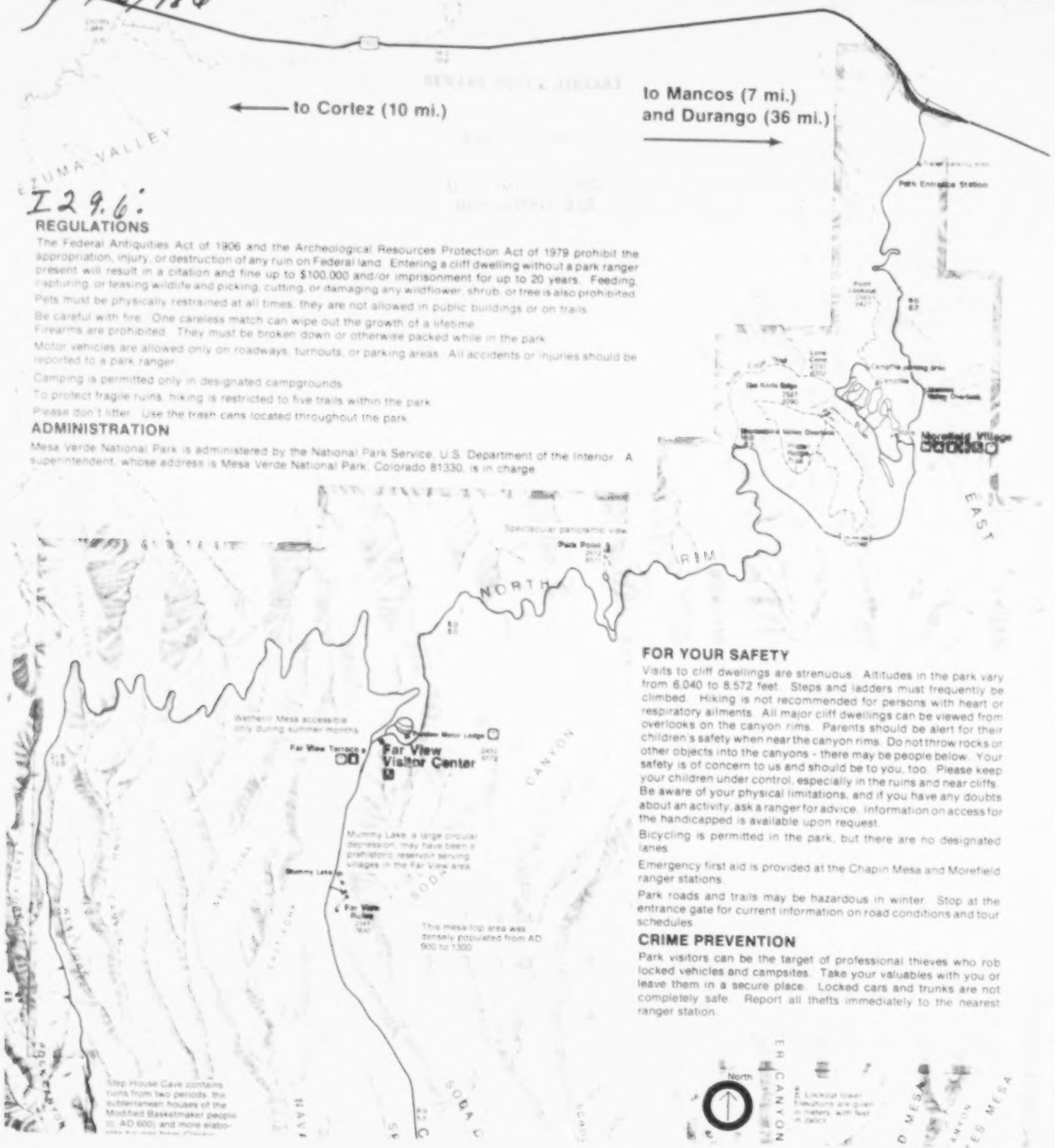
to Cortez (10 mi.)
to Mancos (7 mi.)
and Durango (36 mi.)
PLATEAU
MONTEZUMA VALLEY
Park Entrance Station
Far View Lodge
Far View Terrace
Far View Visitor Center
Wetherill Mesa accessible only during summer months
Mummy Lake, a large circular depression, may have been a prehistoric reservoir serving villages in the Far View area.
Mummy Lake
Far View Ruins
This mesa-top area was densely populated from AD 900 to 1300.
Spectacular panoramic view
Park Point
NORTH RIM
SOUTH RIM
SOUTH CANYON
Step House Cave contains ruins from two periods, the subterranean houses of the Modified Basketmaker people (c. AD 600) and more elaborate

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REGULATIONS

The Federal Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 prohibit the appropriation, injury, or destruction of any ruin on Federal land. Entering a cliff dwelling without a park ranger present will result in a citation and fine up to $100,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 20 years. Feeding, capturing, or teasing wildlife and picking, cutting, or damaging any wildflower, shrub, or tree is also prohibited.

Pets must be physically restrained at all times; they are not allowed in public buildings or on trails.

Be careful with fire. One careless match can wipe out the growth of a lifetime.

Firearms are prohibited. They must be broken down or otherwise packed while in the park.

Motor vehicles are allowed only on roadways, turnouts, or parking areas. All accidents or injuries should be reported to a park ranger.

Camping is permitted only in designated campgrounds.

To protect fragile ruins, hiking is restricted to five trails within the park.

Please don't litter. Use the trash cans located throughout the park.

ADMINISTRATION

Mesa Verde National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado 81330, is in charge.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Visits to cliff dwellings are strenuous. Altitudes in the park vary from 6,040 to 8,572 feet. Steps and ladders must frequently be climbed. Hiking is not recommended for persons with heart or respiratory ailments. All major cliff dwellings can be viewed from overlooks on the canyon rims. Parents should be alert for their children's safety when near the canyon rims. Do not throw rocks or other objects into the canyons - there may be people below. Your safety is of concern to us and should be to you, too. Please keep your children under control, especially in the ruins and near cliffs.

Be aware of your physical limitations, and if you have any doubts about an activity, ask a ranger for advice. Information on access for the handicapped is available upon request.

Bicycling is permitted in the park, but there are no designated lanes.

Emergency first aid is provided at the Chapin Mesa and Morefield ranger stations.

Park roads and trails may be hazardous in winter. Stop at the entrance gate for current information on road conditions and tour schedules.

CRIME PREVENTION

Park visitors can be the target of professional thieves who rob locked vehicles and campsites. Take your valuables with you or leave them in a secure place. Locked cars and trunks are not completely safe. Report all thefts immediately to the nearest ranger station.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

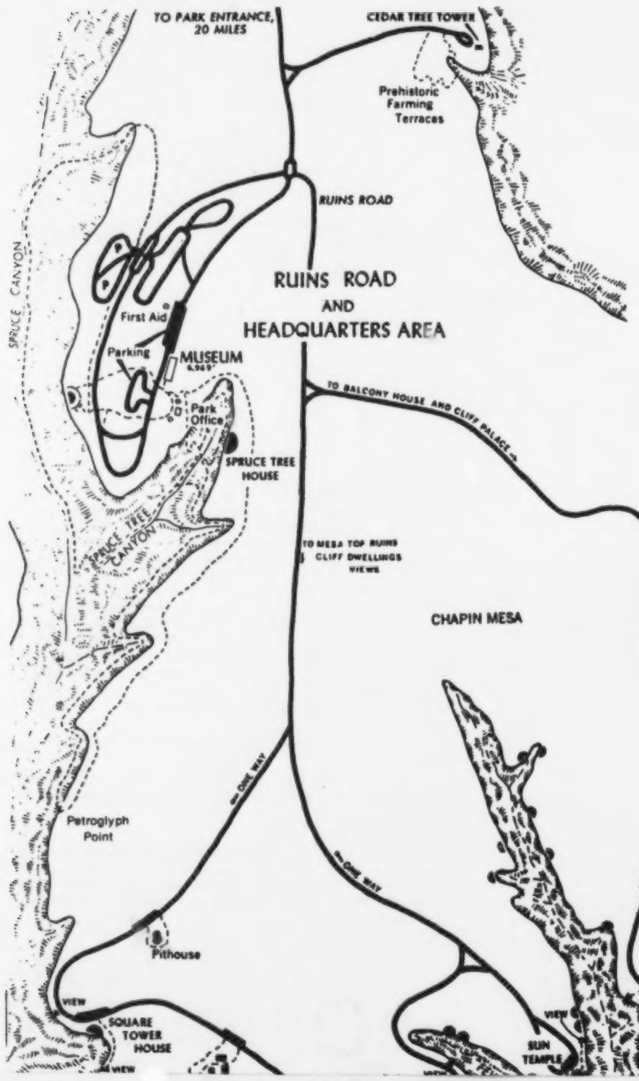
Mesa Verde National Park is located in the high plateau country of southwestern Colorado. The park entrance is midway between Cortez and Mancos, off U.S. 160. It is 21 miles from the entrance to park headquarters and the Chapin Mesa ruins. Morefield Campground is four miles from the entrance; Far View Visitor Center is 15 miles. Allow at least 45 minutes for the drive to Chapin Mesa.

Park roads are scenic drives with sharp curves, steep grades, and reduced speed limits. For your safety, do not park on any roadway.

Mesa Verde is also accessible by common carrier. There are daily scheduled flights to Cortez and Durango; both towns have rental car service. The nearest railroad terminals are Grand Junction, Colorado and Gallup, New Mexico; buses from those points serve Cortez. Buses run from Cortez to the park from mid-May to mid-October.

TO SEE THE PARK

To get the most out of your visit, go first to either the Far View Visitor Center (open only in the summer) or to the Chapin Mesa Museum (open from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. in summer and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year). Rangers there will help you plan your visit.



SERVICES

Food, gasoline, and lodging are available only from mid-May to mid-October. No services are available the rest of the year. Full interpretive services begin in mid- June and continue through Labor Day.

Morefield Campground, open early May through mid-October, has single and group campsites. No reservations are accepted. Six campsites (with restroom) are accessible to physically impaired persons. Each campsite has table, benches, and a grill. The gathering of firewood or injuring of trees or shrubs is prohibited. Camps should not be left unattended for more than 24 hours. There are no utility hookups, but there is a disposal station for dumping trailer tanks. Commercial campgrounds are located near the park entrance

Services at the campground include groceries, carry-out food, gasoline, firewood, showers, and a laundromat. Evening programs are given daily from early June to Labor Day. During the summer non-denominational religious services are held. Three hiking trails originate in the Morefield area.

Park Point offers superb views of the entire Four Corners region. The fire lookout station here is staffed during the fire season. A brochure describes the natural features of the area.

Far View is a major center of visitor service. The visitor center displays contemporary Indian arts and crafts. Trips to Wetherill Mesa leave from the visitor center parking lot; commercial tours of Chapin Mesa leave from Far View Motor Lodge. The Motor Lodge is open mid-May to mid-October. For reservations, write the Mesa Verde Company, Box 277, Mancos, Colorado 81328. Telephone: (303) 529-4421 (summer); (303)533-7731 (winter). The restaurant at the lodge and a cafeteria offer food service, and a gas station provides basic auto service.

Wetherill Mesa is accessible only during the summer by public transportation. No private vehicles are allowed. Catch the bus at the Far View Visitor Center parking lot. The 12-mile bus ride offers scenic views of the Four Corners region. Two ruins, Step House and Long House, are open to the public. Rangers are on duty to interpret the sites. Sandwiches and cold drinks can be purchased at Wetherill.

Chapin Mesa — Three major cliff dwellings are located on Chapin Mesa (Spruce Tree House, Cliff Palace, and Balcony House) and are open seasonally for visits and many others are visible from Ruins Road. An archeological museum with dioramas and exhibits interpret the life of the ancient Anasazi. In summer, rangers conduct tours through cliff dwellings: Current schedules are available at the museum or Far View Visitor Center.

Two hiking trails lead into Spruce Canyon. The Petroglyph Point Trail, 2.8 miles, and Spruce Canyon Trail, 2.1 miles, begin at points on the Spruce Tree House Trail. Hikers must register at the ranger's office before attempting these trails.

Other cliff dwellings can be seen from canyon-rim vantage points by taking the self-guiding loop drives of Ruins Road. Wayside exhibits interpret the development of Anasazi culture from the Basketmakers through the Classic period. These roads are open from 8:00 a.m. until sunset, but are often closed during the winter months. Visitors may snowshoe or cross-country ski as snow conditions permit.

At Spruce Tree Terrace, open from early spring through fall, light snacks, gifts, souvenirs, and bicycle rentals are available. In winter, guided tours are offered to Spruce Tree House, weather and trail conditions permitting.

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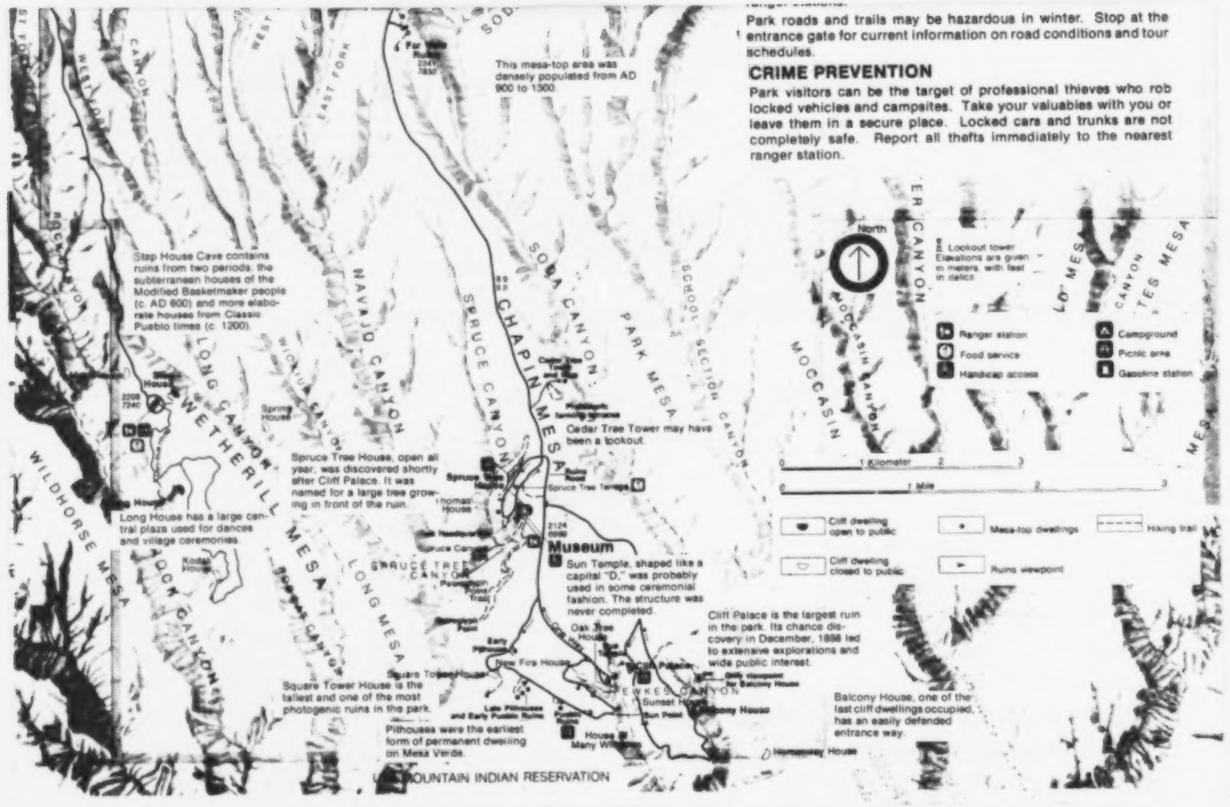
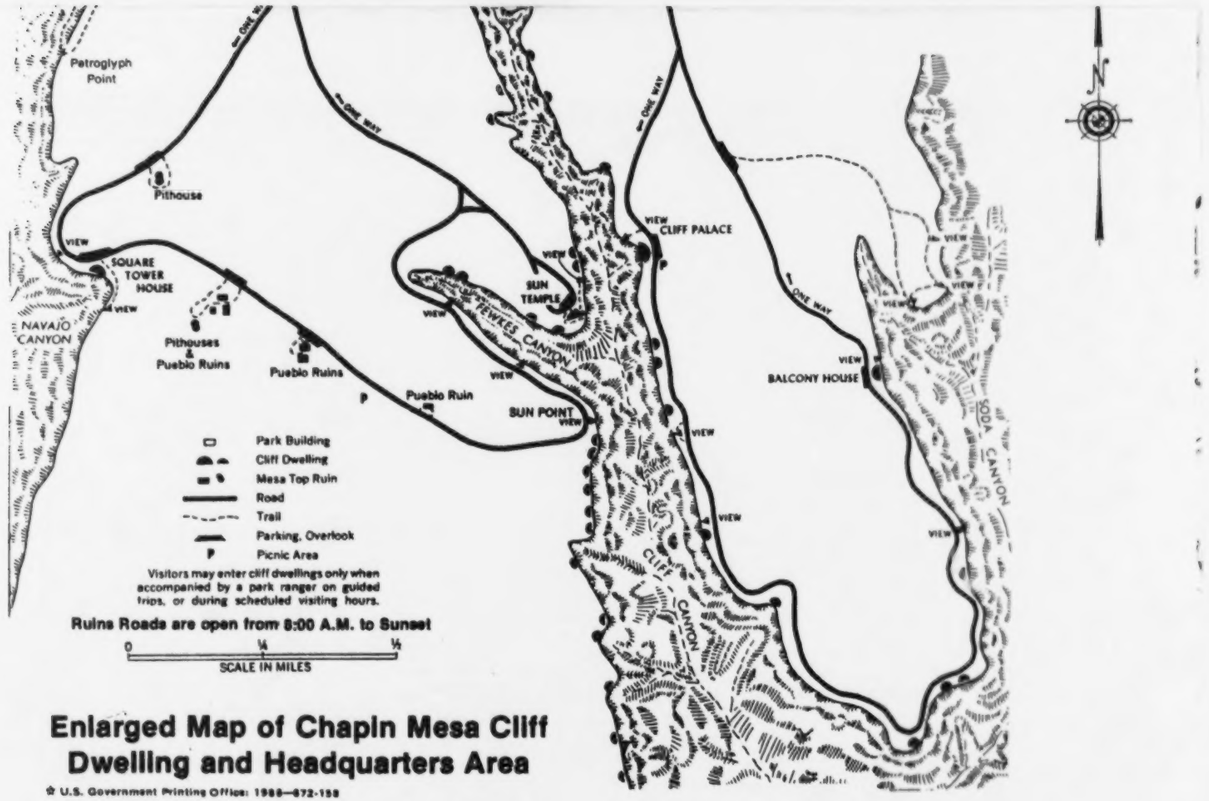

This mesa-top area was densely populated from AD 900 to 1300.
Step House Cave contains ruins from two periods: the subterranean houses of the Modified Basketmaker people (c. AD 600) and more elaborate houses from Classic Pueblo times (c. 1200).
Spruce Tree House, open all year, was discovered shortly after Cliff Palace. It was named for a large tree growing in front of the ruin.
Cedar Tree Tower may have been a lookout.
Long House has a large central plaza used for dances and village ceremonies.
Museum
Sun Temple, shaped like a capital "D," was probably used in some ceremonial fashion. The structure was never completed.
Cliff Palace is the largest ruin in the park. Its chance discovery in December, 1888 led to extensive explorations and wide public interest.
Square Tower House is the tallest and one of the most photogenic ruins in the park.
Pithouses were the earliest form of permanent dwelling on Mesa Verde.
Balcony House, one of the last cliff dwellings occupied, has an easily defended entrance way.
MOUNTAIN INDIAN RESERVATION
North
Lookout tower. Elevations are given in meters, with feet in italics
Ranger station
Food service
Handicap access
Campground
Picnic area
Gasoline station
1 Kilometer
1 Mile
Cliff dwelling open to public
Cliff dwelling closed to public
Mesa-top dwellings
Ruins viewpoint
Hiking trail



Enlarged Map of Chapin Mesa Cliff Dwelling and Headquarters Area

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